

hard study thereafter looks about at the age of twenty for the means to satisfy his already inordinate ambition. Vivian's sword is his wit, and

at this moment how many a powerful noble wants only wit to be a Minister, and what wants Vivian Grey to attain the same end ? That noble's influence. . . . Supposing I am in contact with this magnifico, am I prepared ? Now let me probe my very soul. Does my cheek blanch ? I have the miud for the conception; and I can perform right skilfully upon the most splendid of musical instruments — the human voice — to make those conceptions beloved by others. There wants but one thing more — courage, pure, perfect courage; — and does Vivian Grey know fear ?

He finds his magnifico in the Marquis of Carabas, a weak but vain and ambitious nobleman whom he meets at his father's table. Vivian fascinates him by his ready wit, plays upon his vanity, is invited to his country house, Chateau Desir, and there proceeds to organise a Carabas party out of the friends of the Marquis, prominent among whom, strange to say, is a Lord Beaconsfield — 'a very worthy gentleman, but between ourselves, a damned fool.' The new party will require a leader in the House of Commons, and as Vivian with calculated modesty declines the task he is at his own suggestion despatched to Wales to win over by his diplomacy a certain Cleveland, a young and once promising politician who had been betrayed by the Marquis and had retired from politics in disgust. The mission is successful, and Vivian carries Cleveland back with him to Chateau De'sir. Now, however, a woman who has long been on the scene, but whose place in the scheme of the novel has hitherto seemed uncertain, begins to play a more definite part. Either from jealousy or from sheer love of mischief, she poisons the mind of the Marquis against Vivian Grey, and the catastrophe speedily comes. Dissension and treachery invade the ranks of the plotters, the house of cards that has been so laboriously constructed suddenly collapses, Cleveland is killed in a duel by Vivian Grey,